

J.M. MacInnis

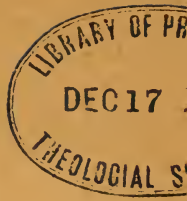
The Historical Order
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Books of the Old Testament

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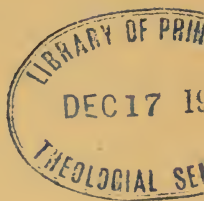
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MONTROSE, PA.

THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PRINT,
MONTROSE, PA.

The Historical Order of the Books of the Old Testament.

The purpose of the following outline is three-fold--

FIRST—To enable the scholar, by the law of Association, to remember the books of the Old Testament.

SECOND—To cultivate an historical sense and interest in the study of the Old Testament.

THIRD—And most important of all, to set the messages of these books in their *true* historical setting in order that they may be more easily understood and more intelligently appreciated.

In order to fully understand and appreciate the Old Testament it is necessary to constantly remember that it is the history of a people chosen, called, and prepared of God for a special purpose, and that purpose was *world-wide* in its interests. On the one hand the people were under the government of God, while on the other hand they were in the world and in touch with the great world powers.

The message of the Old Testament can be properly understood only when studied in the light of this twofold relation.

History Of Israel.

I. The first general Period in the history of Israel we will call: *The Origin and Preparation of the People Outside the Promised Land*. The story of this part of their life is told in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

II. *The people in the promised land—*

1—The Theocracy.

Joshua, Judges and Ruth.

2—The Monarchy.

1 & 2 Sam., 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chron.

During the first part of the monarchy this Kingdom was united under one King who had his residence at Jerusalem, 1051—931 B. C.

At the death of Solomon the ten northern tribes revolted against the house of David and crowned Jeroboam King and finally established their capital at Samaria.

III. *The people under foreign rule—*

Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

About 587 B. C., to the close of the Old Testament history.

This gives us five historical books for the first period, three *double* books for the second, and three for the third period.

During the development of this history the people passed through several crises in which they were threatened with utter destruction. During these critical times God raised up prophets who warned and instructed the people. They were the great preachers of righteousness in their day, and their messages were born of the supreme need of the hour. This was the origin of what are known as the Prophetical books of the Old Testament, and in order to be intelligently studied these books must be studied in the light of the crises that gave them birth.

The first group of writing prophets (the prophets whose message is preserved in the Old Testament) were raised up to save Israel and Judah from destruction by Assyria.

World Powers.

Here we will give the order of the predominance of the great world empires with which Israel came into contact and are mentioned in Old Testament history and prophecy.

Abraham was called from "Ur of the Chaldees," which was on the Western bank of the Euphrates and a part of *old* Babylonia.

This is the nation from which the chosen people were called out, and it was a strong, flourishing empire as early as 5000 B. C.

Khammurabi, whose code of laws was discovered a few years ago and is one of the oldest codes in existence, was one of the greatest Kings of this nation. He reigned about 200 years before Abraham entered Canaan. About 2297-2254 B. C.

The next nation with which Israel came into contact was Egypt, and it played a most important part in the development of the national life.

From about 950 to 606 B. C., Assyria was the dominant world power. This empire flourished in the Valley of the Tigris and Nineveh was one of its capital cities.

During this time Israel also came into contact with Syria which had its capital at Damascus. Benhadad III was one of the best known kings of Syria.

In about 606 B. C. Babylonia under the guidance of Nabopolassar gained the ascendancy and flourished until 536 B. C., when it was overthrown by Cyrus, King of Ansan, who founded the Medo-Persian empire. This great world power was the leading power until about 380 B. C., at which time it was overthrown by Macedonia, which in its turn gave way to the iron power of Rome.

By this outline you will notice that the Assyrian Period in world power corresponds with the last part of the second half of the II Period in the history of Israel, which is designated as "*the time of the divided kingdom.*"

First Group Of Prophets.

It was during this time, then, that the first group of writing prophets flourished.

There are seven in this group, three belonging to the Northern kingdom, three to the Southern kingdom and one to both.

Hosea, Amos and Jonah belonged to the Northern kingdom; Joel, Obadiah and Isaiah belonged to the Kingdom of Judah, while Micah had a message for the north and the south. The activity of these prophets is connected with the reigns of Tiglathpileser III, Shalmanesser IV, Sargon, and Sennacherib of As-

syria; Benhadad III, and Rezin of Syria; Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea, of Israel; and Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, of Judah.

The work of the northern men failed to bring the nation to repentance, and it was consequently destroyed by Sargon about 721 B. C.

The work of the southern prophets was crowned with great success and the nation was saved under Hezekiah, and continued for about 135 years.

Second Group Of Prophets.

The next group of prophets belonged to the Babylonian Period, and were raised up to save Jerusalem from destruction by Babylonia (new Babylonia).

This group was composed of Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Jeremiah, and were contemporaneous with Josiah, Jehoikim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, Kings of Judah; Nabopolassar of Assyria; and Nebuchadrezzar of New Babylonia—about 627-586 B. C.

Notwithstanding the clearness, earnestness and self-sacrifice with which these preachers of righteousness set forth the issues of this crisis in the nation's life, Judah turned a deaf ear to them, and consequently was overcome and led into captivity by the King of New Babylonia about 587 B. C.

But God did not forsake the people. Two of the most interesting of all the Hebrew prophets were sent to them during the Babylonian captivity—Ezekiel and Daniel.

This is known as the Babylonian Period and was about 70 years long. 606-536 B. C.

Third Group Of Prophets.

The next group of prophets belonged to the Persian or Restoration Period. Cyrus, the founder of the Medo-Persian empire overthrew the new Babylonian empire about 538 B. C., and immediately issued an edict allowing a considerable number of the Jews to return to their own land, and to rebuild the temple which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

This work of restoration was carried on under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, and the people were encouraged by Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Poetical Books.

Besides these historical and prophetic books, there are poetical books. These are six in number, and are expressive of the inner religious life of the nation.

They can be conveniently grouped into two groups. We have first Didactic, or teaching Poetry—Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. In the second group we have Lyric, or emotional poetry—Psalms, Song of Songs, and Lamentations.

The key to all this History, Prophecy and Poetry is to be found in the fact that God was endeavoring to teach the chosen people, and demonstrate through them, the fundamental and underlying principle of the universe—

Obedience to God is life:
Disobedience to God is *death*.

Outline Of Old Testament.

In the following chart the books are *approximately* placed. Naturally some of them overlap, and regarding the exact date of some others there is a difference of opinion.

But having carefully considered the facts in the case I feel that the chart is *approximately* correct.

The distinction of "major" and "minor" prophets is not noticed in this outline, for the simple reason that it is superficial and arbitrary and has no real basis in fact.

I. The call and preparation of the nation.

- 1—History, Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., Deut.
- 2—Poetry, Job.

II. The people in the promised land.

1—The Theocracy.

(a) History. Joshua, Judges and Ruth.

2—Monarchy.

(a) Undivided

(1) History—1 Sam., 2 Sam., I Kings 1-11; and I Chron.

(2) Poetry—Psalms 1-90; Proverbs, Ecc., Song of Songs.

(b) The monarchy divided.
931-586 B. C.

(1) History. 1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings; 2 Chron.

(2) Prophets, Assyrian Period, Hosea, Amos, and Jonah in Northern kingdom; Joel, Obadiah and Isaiah in Southern kingdom; and Micah in North and South.

Babylonian Period, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.

(3) Poetry, most of the later Psalms and Lamentations.

III. The people under foreign rule.

1—The captivity.

(a) History.

The most of the history is to be found in the writings of the two prophets of this period, Ezekiel and Daniel.

(b) Poetry, some of the later Psalms undoubtedly belong to this period.

2—The Restoration.

(a) History—Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther.

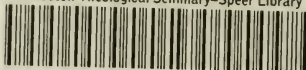
(b) Prophets—Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi.

(c) Poetry—some of the later Psalms.

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